



THE HOURGLASS

NORTHBOROUGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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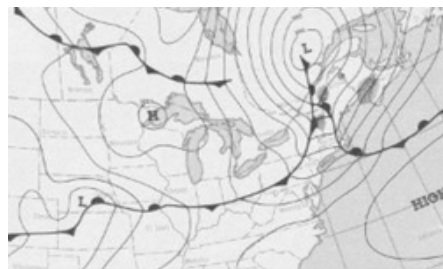
Northborough Historical Society
www.NorthboroughHistoricalSociety.org

February 2017

Next Meeting & Program: February 24, 2017

Tornado! 84 Minutes, 94 Lives

Although the town of Northborough missed the brunt of this disaster, many residents recall the devastation of this storm in nearby towns. John, O'Toole, the author of *Tornado! 84 minutes, 94 Lives*, will present the eyewitness story of the June 9, 1953 tornado that swept through Central Massachusetts. The meeting will be held at 7:30 p.m., at the Society building, 52 Main Street, Northborough. The event is free and open to the public.



Air pressure map of the New England Region
June 9, 1953



History Corner

by Bob Ellis

Northborough's First Schools

To tell the story of the birth of public education in Northborough, it is useful to observe its beginning in Westborough. On December 12, 1726 Ebenezer Parkman, the Westborough minister, wrote in his diary, "Our schoolmaster, Mr. Townsend, came into town and School began." His students may have included some from the future Northborough, then part of the town's northside.

His 1726 contract obliged him "to teach six months in three parts of Westborough," which seems to suggest three school districts with each group of students being instructed for only two months of the year. Because parents expected considerable assistance from their children, however, the children most likely did not consider the other ten months a grand vacation.

Parkman maintained his diary only fitfully in the 1720s and early 1730s; thus there is only one more reference to the new schoolmaster during his first decade. Later there are more. On October 1, 1738 "Mr. Townsend din'd, and by reason of the storm continuing lodg'd here," departing the next morning after the rain slackened." You will notice that Parkman's use of apostrophes, capital letters and such differs from ours.)

In those days schooling in Massachusetts did not imply a schoolhouse. On February 21, 1740 Parkman wrote that "the children went to School at Mr. Townsends, this being the first of my knowing the school was kept there, although it had been kept there this fortnight, as the Master told me." Probably the pastor thought that school was maintained in the private homes of parents.

Illness inevitably intervened in Townsend's life. On December 16 of the same year, Rev. Parkman "visited Mr. Townsends youngest Child that was Sick." Three days later we read: "Cold, and difficult stirring in the Deep Snow—at the Funeral of Mrs. Townsend's youngest child." That would have been Josiah, born on the previous December 24th. "Very cold. Dr. Smith here having again been to Mr. Townsends whose Wife and eldest son Sick." The last-named would have been one of two Samuels in the family. (*Three Joshuas were born to the Townsends, that being the*

Membership

Annual Dues:

Single — \$20
Student/Senior — \$15
Family — \$45
Lifetime — \$250

Send dues to:

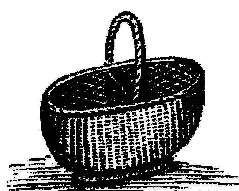
Northborough Historical Society
Membership Secretary
P.O. Box 661
Northborough, MA 01532

*Please make checks payable to
Northborough Historical Society*

Reminder

If there is a red dot in the address panel of this Hourglass, it is time to renew your membership.

(continued on page 2)



Curator's News

by Ellen Racine

After a quiet few months, requests and activities have rebounded. Requests have come in from the Middle School Librarian wishing to borrow primary source materials for a locked display case, and also for use in her classes to introduce children to

the library and its many treasures. A Brownie Scout group will be renting the hall again, and the Northborough Library staff along with the Town Clerk will visit our archive and museum in the near future.

For the Museum opening day on May 7th, the Museum Trustees will be working on a new exhibit commemorating Northborough's contributions to WWI. We hope to have a music program and refreshments during the afternoon.

Recent Accessions:

Women's hats from the 1950/60s from Trisha and Joseph Benedict
250th Anniversary memorabilia from the Town 250th Celebration Committee

Commemorative coin proofs for the 1975 U.S. Bicentennial

Several photographs of 80 Main Street during the 1920s from Carl Erickson

History Corner, continued

father’s name.) Although the deaths of these children do not appear in the Westborough Vital Records up to 1849, multiples of the same name certainly signify deaths. Mercy Townsend, the mother, did survive this round of afflictions.

Now we move to Joshua Townsend’s duties in the new Northborough district. On June 5, 1745 Parkman makes this short entry. “Mr. Townsend from the Northside here, and very full of discourse.” We are now encountering what for us is one of Parkman’s shortcomings: he characteristically avoids quoting his visitors. We would very much like to know what Joshua said—about teaching, about *anything*. We can, however, get some sense of what he could see. By this time he had most likely settled in his new house, which still stands at the corner of Howard and Brewer Streets.

Another diary entry a few months later gives us some sense of Townsend’s status: Parkman named “Deacon Townsend” among those present to honor his mother, when she died. Parkman’s modern editor identifies this individual as Joshua Townsend. This position, along with the fact that his successor as Northborough schoolmaster, William Jenison, was a minister indicates that early schoolmasters were chosen from important men. By contrast, nineteenth-

century school committees often called on women whose main qualification, other than their availability, consisted of their own completion of elementary school. Some men (but usually college undergraduates) also served as teachers.

Northborough moved quickly to establish schools to teach the ‘three R’s.’ Eighty-five people were assigned to organize four district schools in 1770. The eighty men must have represented a large majority of adult males in the village. Of the five women, three represented the First Squadron (West School), two the Second (South School); the east- and north-siders named none. In Northborough it took a decade to establish the need for official schoolhouses instead of private homes.

In the following decades, for the most part we know less about individual teachers than we do about Joshua Townsend. Unlike his eighteenth-century counterpart in Westborough, Dr. Joseph Allen did not so far as we know keep a diary, but he served as chairman of the school committee for decades and regularly guided school inspections. Education had become and would remain a vital part of Northborough life.

250th Anniversary “Ghosts in the Graveyard” Cemetery Tour

On Saturday, September 24th 2016, the Northborough Historical Society and 250th Celebration Committee co-sponsored the “Ghosts in the Graveyard” Cemetery Tour, which brought back to life thirteen Northborough citizens to talk about their lives. We were very fortunate to have a pleasant evening that brought about 150 guests to the cemetery. All in all, everyone had a wonderful time representing the deceased Northborough citizens and learning about their lives.

The planning committee of Melanie Magee, Arlene Marshall and Norm Corbin would like to thank the following volunteers for all their efforts.

Reenactors:

Alexandra Molnar (Marion Zeh), Brian Smith (Captain Samuel Wood), Lois Smith (Susanna Fife Wood), Linda Corbin (Mary Fairbank), Tom Lowe (Reverend Peter Whitney), Beth Finch-McCarthy (Bessie Murray), Bob Marchetta (Dr. Josiah Stanley), Bill Pantazis (Thomas Blair), Forest Lyford (Cyrus Gale Jr.), Ellen Racine (Lucy Ware Clark Allen), Ernie Racine (Reverend Joseph Allen), Mark Bashour (Warren Eames), Frank Bissett (Christopher Columbus Eames).

Tour Guides:

Dave Carlson, Amy Graham, Zenya Molnar, Dale Magee, Linda Abusamra, Dawn Rand, Michael Rose, Pam Pollan, Jane Pond.

Support Staff:

Jenifer Kahn Bakkala (Art Work), Ellen Racine (Clothing), Bob Ellis, (Historic Information), Kathleen Pierce (Historic Information), Andy Dowd (Welcome Table), Barbara Dowd (Welcome Table).

Save time. Save money. Save space. Save our planet.

Would you like to have one less piece of paper to deal with each month?

Would you like to help the Society save more than \$1000 each year?

Would you like to receive the Hourglass in the most environmentally friendly way?

Would you like to receive the Hourglass by email?

If yes, please email your request to northborough_historical_society@charter.net

Next

Board of Directors

Meeting

Tuesday, March 14